

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02906 251257Z  
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02  
SS-15 ICA-11 ACDA-12 /102 W  
-----112596 251303Z /47

P R 251045Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8084  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2906

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PEPR PINT LE  
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: CONVERSATION WITH FRENCH AMBASSADOR

1. SUMMARY: DURING ONE-HOUR CONVERSATION ON MAY 24, FRENCH AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED GOF VIEWS ON THE ROLE OF SYRIA IN LEBANON, THE OCCUPATION OF TYRE BY THE FRENCH UNIFIL CONTINGENT, THE ACTIVITIES OF UNIFIL, INCLUDING THE POSSIBILITY OF LAF PARTICIPATION, AND THE IMPORTANCE FOR FRANCE OF A PROMPT ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. END SUMMARY.

2. CHARGE CALLED ON FRENCH AMBASSADOR MAY 24. DURING ONE-HOUR CONVERSATION, DURING WHICH FRENCH COUNSELOR OF EMBASSY DE LAVERGNEE WAS ALSO PRESENT, THEY MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

3. THE ROLE OF THE SYRIANS IN LEBANON. AFTER MEETING WITH A NUMBER OF LEBANON'S TRADITIONAL POLITICAL LEADERS AS WELL AS  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 02906 251257Z

FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS DURING HIS RECENT VISIT, QUAI D'ORSAY DIRECTOR OF ME AFFAIRS SERVAN HAD CONCLUDED THAT SYRIA WAS PLAYING BOTH A POSITIVE AND A NEGATIVE ROLE IN LEBANON. ON PLUS SIDE, PRESENCE OF 20,000-30,000 SYRIAN TROOPS WAS THE MAJOR FACTOR IN PREVENTING RENEWAL OF CONFLICT BETWEEN LEBANON'S VARIOUS ARMED FACTIONS -- THE CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM MILITIAS, AND THE PALESTINIANS. ON THE OTHER HAND, SYRIA'S INTERFERENCE IN LEBANON'S

INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS WAS COMPLICATING AN ALREADY DIFFICULT SITUATION. IN FRENCH VIEW, SYRIA HAD MADE CLEAR THAT IT WOULD NOT AGREE TO ANY NEW LEBANESE CABINET THAT DID NOT INCLUDE SYRIAN SYMPATHIZERS, SUCH AS ASSEM KANSU AND KAMAL SHATILA. SINCE CAMILLE CHAMOUN REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY GOVERNMENT WHICH INCLUDED THEM, PROGRESS TOWARDS POLITICAL RECONCILIATION WAS FROZEN. FRENCH THOUGHT CHAMOUN'S POSITION WAS UNREALISTIC; GIVEN THE GEOPOLITICAL FACTS, LEBANESE CHRISTIANS WOULD HAVE TO ACCEPT AT LEAST SOME SYRIAN INFLUENCE IN LEBANON'S POLITICAL LIFE.

4. FRENCH OCCUPATION OF TYRE. AMBASSADOR ARGOD SAID THAT WHEN FRENCH UNIFIL TROOPS FIRST ARRIVED IN TYRE, THE PORT AREA ITSELF WAS DESERTED. FRENCH HAD TRIED TO PERSUADE THE SMALL UNIT OF LEBANESE GENDARMES, WHICH HAD HOLED UP IN ITS BARRACKS NEARBY, TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE PORT WITH FRENCH SUPPORT. LEBANESE HAD REFUSED TO BUDGE. EVEN WHEN A SHIP ARRIVED AT TYRE HARBOR, FRENCH HAD BEEN UNABLE TO PERSUADE LEBANESE GENDARMES TO ASSUME OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR HANDLING SHIP'S DOCUMENTS, EVEN WITH FRENCH SUPPORT. AS A RESULT, PALESTINIANS MET THE SHIP, COLLECTED LL2 MILLION IN CUSTOMS' FEES, AND HAVE CONTROLLED PORT AREA EVER SINCE. FRENCH DEEPLY REGRETTED THIS MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO REASSERT LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY.

5. THE ROLE OF UNIFIL.

A. FRENCH SAID THAT THEIR UNIFIL CONTINGENT HAD RECEIVED ORDERS  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 02906 251257Z

TO EXAMINE DOCUMENTS OF ALL THOSE SEEKING TO RETURN SOUTH LEBANON; THEORETICALLY, ONLY LEBANESE WHO WERE BORN IN SOUTH LEBANON WERE TO BE ALLOWED INTO UNIFIL AREA BUT IN PRACTICE MOST WHO WERE UNARMED WERE ALLOWED TO ENTER.

B. ARGOD SAID THAT WHEN SERVAN HAD MET WITH QADDUMI, QADDUMI HAD ARGUED THAT UNIFIL HAD NO RIGHT TO INTERFERE WITH ANY ARMED PALESTINIANS IT MIGHT FIND IN SOUTH LEBANON. ACCORDING TO QADDUMI, SIMPLE BEARING OF ARMS WITHIN THE UNIFIL AREA WAS NOT A "HOSTILE" ACT WITHIN THE MEANING OF UN RESOLUTION 426. ONLY IF ONE ATTEMPTED TO USE THE WEAPON COULD THE ACT BE CONSIDERED HOSTILE. ARGOD SAID THAT IF THIS INTERPRETATION IS ACCEPTED, UNARMED PALESTINIANS, WITH FORGED LEBANESE ID CARDS IF NECESSARY, CAN EASILY CROSS UNIFIL LINES, PICK UP ARMS THEY HAD PREVIOUSLY HIDDEN, AND REESTABLISH THEIR ARMED PRESENCE IN SOUTH LEBANON.

C. AMBASSADOR ARGOD SAID THAT EVEN IF THE ISRAELIS WITHDRAW FROM ALL OF SOUTH LEBANON ON JUNE 13 AS PROMISED, HE VERY MUCH FEARED THERE WOULD BE FURTHER INCIDENTS. LAVERGNEE REMARKED THAT PREVIOUS INCIDENTS INVOLVING THE FRENCH CONTINGENT HAD OCCURRED IMMEDIATELY AFTER EARLIER ISRAELI WITHDRAWALS, WHEN PALESTINIANS WERE TRYING TO REESTABLISH CONTACTS. PROBLEM WOULD BE FURTHER

COMPLICATED BY THE NEED TO WORK OUR RELATIONS BETWEEN UNIFIL AND CHRISTIAN MILITIA FORCES, WHICH HAD RECENTLY BEEN REINFORCED. FRENCH WERE NOT SURE THAT HADDAD AND SHIDIAC WOULD ALLOW UNIFIL TO OPERATE IN THEIR AREAS BUT WERE CERTAIN THAT CHRISTIAN MILITIAS WOULD NOT ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE DISARMED. AMBASSADOR ARGOD THOUGHT THERE WAS MORE POTENTIAL FOR TROUBLE AFTER JUNE 13 THAN BETWEEN NOW AND THAT DATE.

6. THE ROLE OF LEBANESE TROOPS. AMBASSADOR ARGOD SAID THAT ACCORDING TO HIS INFORMATION, THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IS STILL REFUSING TO SEND ANY LEBANESE ARMY (LAF) UNITS TO SOUTH LEBANON. THE GOL EXPLAINED THAT THEY COULD NOT SEND SUCH UNITS BY ROAD BECAUSE THEY WOULD HAVE TO PASS THROUGH PALESTINIAN-CONTROLLED TERRITORY AND THE PALESTINIANS HAVE REFUSED TO GIVE THEIR PERMISSION. CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BEIRUT 02906 251257Z

MISSION. ALTHOUGH LAF UNITS COULD THEORETICALLY BE SENT BY SEA, THIS WAS NOT A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE BECAUSE IT WOULD BE AN EXTREMELY EMBARRASSING ADMISSION THAT THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT EVEN SEND ITS OWN ARMY TO SOME PARTS OF LEBANON. IN RESPONSE TO CHARGE'S QUESTION ABOUT POSSIBLE DEPLOYMENT OF PURELY SYMBOLIC LAF UNITS, ARGOD SAID THAT IF THEIR FUNCTION WAS LIAISON WITH LOCAL POPULATION AND INTERPRETING, THIS COULD BE BETTER PERFORMED BY GENDARMES. ARGOD SAID THAT THERE WERE NOW SMALL GROUPS OF LEBANESE GENDARMES STATIONED AT ALL FRENCH-MANNED POSTS AND HE UNDERSTOOD THIS WAS TRUE OF SENEGALESE OUTPOSTS AS WELL. HE WAS NOT SURE OF SITUATION REGARDING OTHER UNIFIL CONTINGENTS. WE AGREED THAT FIGURE OF 250 GENDARMES WE HAD BOTH BEEN GIVEN BY THE GOL WAS A TOTAL FOR ALL PARTS OF SOUTH LEBANON AND PROBABLY INCLUDED SOME WHO HAD NOT YET REPORTED BACK FOR DUTY.

7. AS CHARGE WAS LEAVING, FRENCH COUNSELOR STRESSED IMPORTANCE FOR FRANCE OF COMPLETE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL ON JUNE 13 AS PROMISED. FRENCH BELIEVED THAT ONLY WHEN THE ISRAELIS WERE TOTALLY OUT OF LEBANON WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO WORK OUT A MODUS VIVENDI BETWEEN UNIFIL, THE PALESTINIANS AND THE LEBANESE WHICH WOULD HAVE SOME CHANCE OF ENDURING. IN ADDITION, FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN UNIFIL HAD BEEN SEVERELY CRITICIZED IN SOME QUARTERS IN FRANCE. AN ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL AS SCHEDULED WOULD BE ONE SOLID ACCOMPLISHMENT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT COULD POINT TO AS A POSITIVE RESULT OF ITS PARTICIPATION IN THE UNIFIL EXERCISE. LANE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN



## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** TROOP DEPLOYMENT, AMBASSADORS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCES, POLITICAL SITUATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 25 may 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978BEIRUT02906  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780221-0014  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** BEIRUT  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1978/newtext/t19780521/aaaaarik.tel  
**Line Count:** 162  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** 0dfc4497-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 29 jun 2005  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 2578246  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** SOUTH LEBANON: CONVERSATION WITH FRENCH AMBASSADOR  
**TAGS:** PEPR, PINT, LE, US  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/0dfc4497-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014